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Testimony of Representative Vicki Doudera in support of
**LD 294, An Act to Include a Tribal Member in the Baxter State Park
Authority**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Good afternoon Senator Ingwerson, Representative Pluecker and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Vicki Doudera and I represent House District 41, which includes Camden and Rockport. I am here before you today to speak in support of **LD 67, An Act to Include a Tribal Member in the Baxter State Park Authority**.

From the windswept peak of Mount Katahdin, to the quiet crevices of the Pomola caves, to the volcanic peaks and rugged trails of the Traveler Mountain Loop — my hikes in Baxter State Park have left me with a profound sense of awe, a feeling defined as being “in the presence of something vast that transcends your understanding of the world.” According to a new book, “Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life,” awe is critical to our well-being — just like joy, contentment and love. The research of the book’s author, Dr. Dacher Keltner, suggests that this emotion has tremendous health benefits that include calming down our nervous system and triggering the release of oxytocin, the “love” hormone that promotes trust and bonding.¹

But we all see from a different lens, and we all experience things differently. While Baxter leaves me awestruck, others will feel a profound sense of history; hearkening back to the work of Governor Percival P. Baxter and members of the Maine legislature beginning in 1931. Others will come upon the streams and waterfalls and be struck by the Park’s fragile beauty. Many will marvel at the biodiversity of Baxter State Park; the variety of wildlife and plants within its 200,000 acres. Finally, there are those who will visit Baxter State Park and experience a deep sense of spirituality, a cultural connection that perhaps combines all of the emotions I’ve described.

¹ New York Times, January 3, 2023, [How a Bit of Awe Can Improve Your Health](#).

It is easy for us to see that our perspective on a place is the only one — the right one. But we all view the world from our unique vantage point on this planet. If we see only with our own eyes, our own background, our own history, our focus is very narrow. We have walked only in our own shoes.

Every governing board that I have ever served on has benefited tremendously from diversity and inclusion. From different viewpoints. At Baxter State Park, it's time to draw the circle of governance wider. It is time — and many would say long overdue — to include a tribal member as part of the Baxter State Park Authority.

Why? The reasons are myriad, but one is that we face great challenges in our state — the greatest of our day being climate change — and meeting it means we have to expand and diversify the kinds of evidence and knowledge we rely upon to make critical decisions. This is essential because when more forms of evidence are considered, better decision-making results, and we don't have a second to waste.

I leave you with the insight of Cheryl Andrews-Maltais, Chairwoman of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah, who spoke in December on the topic of Indigenous Knowledge in Federal policy making. She said, “Had our traditional cultural practices and ceremony not been outlawed and had our information keepers been listened to over the centuries, we probably would not find ourselves in the position we are today – with the losses and extinction and contamination we face as our global community. This is a valuable component of being able to face not only climate change but the preservation and protection of all of our resources.”²

I ask you to help preserve and protect the incredible, awe-inspiring resource that is Baxter State Park by voting today to include one member of a federally recognized Indian nation, tribe or band from this state to the Baxter State Park Authority. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Rep. Vicki Doudera

² The White House, December 2, 2022. [What is Ancestral Knowledge, and Why Does it Matter?](#)